

# LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . . ' James Connolly

## THE PARISH PUMP



"This is me, the pig-buyer, in the middle"



# SITTING ON A FORTUNE

by DERMOT McEVOY

GOLD is where you find it. Not the stuff that comes in 2.2 lb ingots or in the handier Krugerrands, the South African gold coins that are guaranteed to contain 1 oz. Troy. That's strictly for the bourgeoisie who've spent a desperate Christmas and an even more desperate New Year buying gold at soaring prices in a last-ditch stand against the inflation that is making a nonsense of their bits of paper showing Lady Lavery or Queen Elizabeth. The gold I refer to is strictly metaphorical: the gold of enduring friendship, of the solidarity of the masses against the bosses, of the poet's kindred feeling that makes us wondrous kind. You cannot have enough of that brand. As regards the other kind; be content to leave the hoarding — and the attendant worries (may they continue!) — to the profiteers who have battened on the toilers and, remembering Franz Fanon, the wretched of the earth. Not least to the fellow I heard about on the BBC who ordered as a Christmas present — for himself, a course — a lavatory seat made of solid gold at a cost of £28,000!. (The BBC with commendable delicacy did not say if it was made to measure). Nor did they give the name or address of this exemplar of capitalist society who'll be sitting on a fortune in this New Year. If they had, I would have been happy to send him on your behalf a whole year's supply of castor oil and of the Dyer's Versicant I reserve for constipated fools so that he might never get off his throne except, of course, to wipe himself with Lady Laverys.

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In a way this poor little rich man's choice of a Christmas present would have pleased Lenin — through his private use of it might not. For Lenin, looking to world victory for Communism, wrote in 1921: "We will use gold to build public lavatories in some of the largest cities". Meanwhile, he cautioned, Russian gold — and the Soviet Union is the second biggest producer in the world — should be sold to the highest bidder "for when you live among wolves, you must howl like a wolf". Somehow I feel that Lenin would have given a discount to our enterprising friend of the solid gold seat. Or at least the Russian equivalent of my castor oil!

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But back to the home front. What did your Government and mine give the working man for Christmas, apart from in Dublin the £10 turkey, waffle about higher education for the sons of grocers (what'll they do with it when they get it?), exhortations to 'buy Irish' (what do you use for money?), the promise of higher-prices-but-no-wage-rises, and the threat of fewer jobs? The answer is what I got when I permitted myself to be taken to see an *avant-garde* film called *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (Shrieks in favour of the Marquis de Sade): a blank screen for thirty minutes with an unintelligible sound track. That's what I got — just like what you got for Christmas. And what we shall continue to get — and deserve — until the urban worker and the small farmer (really an agricultural labourer) elect a Government that will insist on fair shares.

You won't get a smell of the fast-diminishing Gross National Product until you chuck into the dustbin the whole ragbag of Fianna Fail Godfathers, Fine Gael Godfathers — in-law-and-order, and, let's not put a tooth in it, not a few of the so-called Labour TDs. For instance, in Limerick alone you could do without Dessie O'Malley. Not to leave him without something to do altogether, the burgesses could make him a local, acting lance-corporal unpaid in charge of morals (remember his "It is the Government's duty to put down fornication and promiscuity"?). He might even like the job as voyeur in, say, Garryowen. Not to speak of Corbally. Stevie Coughlan? Well, his own private and family interests could

only benefit from his full-time application. The suffix, T.D., must sometimes get in the way of a man who sees in the history of his country's progress only the geography of his own advancement. There are two targets to get on with. When I make my *ad limina* visitation to Limerick and hear the tales of Shem and Shaun and the whispers from the shade of Bishop O'Dwyer I shall expand the list and they'll none of 'em be missed!, they'll none of 'em be missed!

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A journalist of the old school, mild mannered and polite (a rare combination these days, and becoming rarer), who casts a cold eye on my pieces in the *Limerick Socialist*, says I'm much too splenetic, that I've a down on everyone. Have you no heroes, he asks. But, of course, I have. Everyman. For as the philosopher George Santyana wrote (I quote from memory): "To survive this life every man has to be something of a saint and something of a hero". I serve, I hope, to remind you that every saint has a past and every sinner a future.

As regards the latest saint about to be added to the calendar, Oliver Plunkett, I am indebted to Father James Good, writing in *Hibernia*, the fortnightly review, for the information that he led the Inquisition against heretics, notably Protestants. Odd that writing recently in the *Irish Times*, Fr. Paul Devereux, of the Society of Jesus, regretted that there are not more Protestants in the Republic to give our country a better balance, to make us a more open pluralist society. He omitted to mention Blessed Oliver's efforts to achieve the opposite or, in our day, the late Senator Lennon's robust declaration on Protestant pleas, backed by the *Irish Times*, for legal divorce, contraception and an easing of an all-embracing censorship of books and films, that "error must not be tolerated!" If it is splenetic to remind you of these things, I say *mea culpa*. (Whether Matt Talbot should be classed as a saint or a scab is outside my frame of reference). Specifically, my heroes are few: for one, historically, Saint-Just ("A brain of fire, a heart of ice", in Barere's famous summary).

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Conor Cruise O'Brien is better able to defend himself than I would dare — and does not shirk the task. But it is specially odious that he has to defend himself against the accusation that he set the Guards after the Provos at Feakle when they were negotiating peace with Protestant clergymen. Provos and Peace! God, love a duck. Leaving that mixture to those with strong stomachs, Conor Cruise O'Brien was in Ghana at the time, but at least one Dublin newspaper did not mention it.

As Robespierre said: "On the day when crime puts on the apparel of innocence, through a curious reversal peculiar to our age, it is innocence that is called on to justify itself". All that's wrong with that is that it is not peculiar to any age-in Ireland!

Of my hero, Saint-Just, what endears him to me was his boast: "I have left all weakness behind. I have seen in the universe nothing but the truth, and I have proclaimed it". Though George Bruun V, my third hero's biographer, found Saint-Just too lacking in humour to suspect that he might be clinging to a pose rather than a principle, he pays him this tribute: "If it was a pose, at least he preserved it faithfully until the knife of the guillotine flickered above him in the light of the setting sun". Surely a hero.

Let us leave the final word to Robespierre, who was guillotined the same day: "The people must rise, not to collect sugar but to lay low the brigands". And with sugar poised to double in price this Spring, you could do worse than take the hint.



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 A DISCUSSION ARTICLE
 

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WESTERN capitalist propagandists often point out that our information on China is very slim. This is a myth. There is plenty of information on China and its policies if one cares to look for it and not depend on the Western press. Even in Britain there are special university departments in Chinese studies and political studying developments in that country. This short article will endeavour to point out some of the policies of China and list some defects as well as good points.

On 2nd October, 1973 Chian Juan-Hua, Chairman of the Chinese delegation to the 28th General Assembly of the United Nations and Vice-Foreign Minister, addressed the General Assembly. He set out Chinese policies comprehensively at this meeting. Among his main points are the following:—

*The world is going through a great process of turbulence and realignment. The basic contradictions are sharpening, especially that between imperialism and colonialism on the one hand and the oppressed nations and peoples on the other, and that among the imperialist countries especially the two superpowers. Since World War II, local wars resulting from imperialist aggression have never ceased. The victory of the Vietnamese people has once again found that imperialists and all reactionaries are paper tigers. A weak nation can defeat a strong one; imperialism fears the people; and revolution is the main trend in the world today. In a word, we consider the present situation one of great disorder and not tranquility. The main trend is that countries want independence, nations want liberalism and the people want revolution.*

With regard to the superpower rivalry between the U.S. and Russia he has this to say: "As sovereign states, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are fully entitled to take measures they deem appropriate to improve and develop their bilateral relations. However the agreement between them on the prevention of nuclear war goes far beyond the scope of bilateral relations. Who has given them the right to enter into urgent consultations in case of a dispute between either of the parties and other countries and even between any other two countries?" This agreement between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. is based on the principle agreed between them in 1972 that the two countries have security interests based on the principle of equality. Put bluntly, this means rivalry for world hegemony.

It is not easy for the U.S.S.R. to bind herself to the U.S. In spite of the agreement the desperate struggle for nuclear superiority and work supremacy still goes on. Their contention now extends over the whole world as is proved by the recent subversion of a government in Asia and another in South America, this is why there is no tranquility in the world today. This is a travesty of peaceful co-existence: the substance is co-existence in rivalry — can such co-existence last?

The Soviet leaders claim the Soviet Union is the "natural and surest ally of the developing countries". In the past some Chinese believed this, but after Khrushchev came to power direct experience proved that the Soviet Union practised not internationalism but great power chauvinism, national egoism and territorial expansionism. History shows that a socialist can turn into an imperialist and if people change, so can a state.

Lenin's saying, "We judge a person not by what he says or thinks of himself but by his actions", applies to a state as well. This is clear to the masses of Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Pakistan, Cambodia and to others who have been subjected to interference. Soviet actions show that the government is socialist in words and imperialist in deeds in Lenin's phrase.

This statement gives an idea of China's stated policy. She has also said that she will not be the first to use nuclear weapons, a guarantee not given by any of the other nuclear powers despite their talks on nuclear disarmament. China also gives aid in the form of credit that is with no interest rate

# CHINA TODAY

unlike the U.S.S.R. which charges a low rate of interest and the Western Powers which charge the going international usury rate usually. Often aid has a lot of strings attached, a question outside the scope of this article, although China demands no such strings.

On the deficit side there is the question that the Chinese, who along with America were against independence for Bangladesh, made a big mistake. Also at one stage there was to my mind too much glorification of Mao Tse Tung although that phase seems to be passing. At any rate China was a poor peasant country which has seen enormous changes economically and ideologically in the last twenty five years. The Chinese admit that they make mistakes and engage in self-criticism.

Their actions generally justify their policies and would seem to be a model for many. Third World countries leaders flock to China on visits. China's statements at the World Population Conference held recently showed that they had a different viewpoint on the solutions to this immediate world problem than those of Russia or the U.S.S.R.

In concluding this short article it is obvious that China has something different and original to say and, whatever one's own opinion of their theory and practice and some unexplained developments in that country in recent years, it is worth watching and listening to. The last sentence of Chiao Kuan-Hua address at the United Nations is worth remembering. "In the final analysis, the destiny of mankind is decided by the people in their hundreds of millions who persevere in struggle and unity and not by one or two superpowers".

by P.A.L.

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 PRICE INCREASE
 

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WITH this issue the price of the "Limerick Socialist" goes up from 6p to 8p. We regret this increase but if the paper is to continue to be published this decision is necessary. Since the paper first appeared three years ago paper and printing costs have almost doubled in price. Postal charges have also doubled in the same period.

Because of this situation the annual subscription to the paper is going up from £1 to £1.50p. We hope our readers and supporters will understand and accept the reasons for this action. We are confident that they will continue to support the paper in the forthcoming months.

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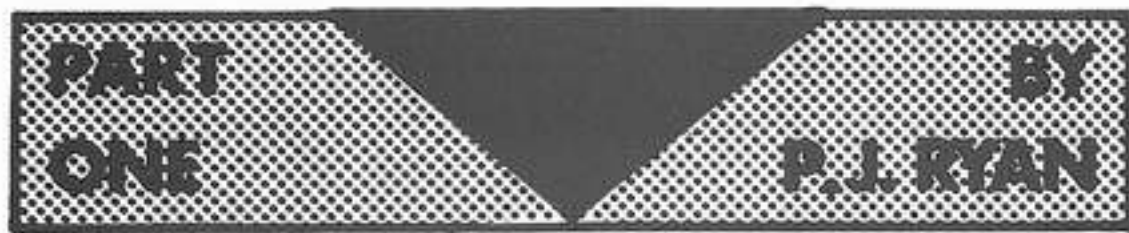
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## FOREWARD

During the course of the Civil War against the Irish Free State, the National Army troops were called Free Staters; in time this was shortened to "Staters".

Those who opposed the lawfully elected Government called themselves Republicans. The public called them "Die-hard Republicans", this was shortened to "Die-hards". Both parties took pride in their respective names. On this account those two terms Staters and Die-hards are used throughout this book.

The known history of Limerick goes back almost a thousand years before 1199 when King John granted a charter to the city to perform certain acts and enjoy certain privileges in his name. John was the youngest son of Henry 2nd and gained the throne of England on the death of his brother Richard 1 in 1199. John was a literate man and a good penman. He was addicted to signing documents. Under the threat of excommunication and eternal damnation he signed away the Kingdom of England and Ireland to the Vatican in order to receive them back again as the vassal or serf of Pope Innocent 11. Under threat of death from the English barons he signed the Magne Carta which in effect committed all future kings to the will of their subjects.

Prior to all this penmanship and free from threats of Interdiction, John signed a charter which designated Limerick as *Urbs antiqua fuit studiisque asperrima beil* - An ancient city studied in the arts of war. As the title was in Latin it is likely that the Charter was also in Latin, so that it can be accepted that John was a literate man. Limerick is thus one of the first chartered cities in Europe and is older than London which did not get a charter until years later. The King John charter empowered the citizens to elect a Mayor and Sheriff and since that time a succession of almost eight hundred Mayors and Sheriffs have held office in the city.

Centuries before 1199 other recorded events show the antiquity of the city. Because of the clemency of the merciful Diocletian ("I cannot make war on my own people") or the terrors of the vengeful Caracalla, some refugees from the justice of the Roman empire arrived in this country as Christian missionaries. The progress of those Christian missionaries through the country was like the rampage of a vandal horde. They sacrilegiously destroyed the shrines and altars of the native Pagan gods. They profaned the sacred graves and wells. They desecrated all that was sacred to Pagan belief. It is recorded that at Slane, Co. Meath, "St. Patrick threw down Crom Cruagh and his sub gods twelve". There seems to have been several St. Patricks.

On coming south, St. Patrick and his followers crossed the Shannon and Limerick became the victim of their missionary zeal, so that not a trace remains near the city, of that golden Pagan age, while the County of Limerick and the nearby County of Clare abound in the splendid stone age monuments of pagan life and culture.

A century after the King John charter, Edward 1 gave the city a charter and was followed by Henry 1V in 1400. Henry V granted a charter in 1413 which was followed by a charter from Henry VI in 1429. Henry VII granted a charter in 1489 which confirmed all previous charters. In 1551 Edward VI granted the city a charter which no doubt differed little from all earlier charters.

The English race held in high esteem Queen Elizabeth 1, she in turn thought highly of Limerick City. In 1575 she granted the city a charter which amongst other privileges granted that a Sword of State and Cap of Maintenance be borne before the Mayor within the city and Liberties of Limerick. By Royal favour she granted a second charter in 1582.

In those centuries the royal charters were not granted to

# The Fourth Siege of Limerick

the city from mere kindness of heart. They were paid for in cash and tribute.

"James by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, Ireland and France" is the heading and, "on the third day of March and the 6th of Our reign" is the tail-end of a charter which James 1 gave to the city in 1609. That charter created the Mayor, Admiral of the Shannon, with jurisdiction from three miles above the city in the North-east to where it joins the ocean in the South-west. By this charter the Mayor was empowered to hold a Court of Admiralty on every Monday of every year. All flotsam and jetsam, all wrecks, corpses and treasures found on the Shannon, on its banks and on its tributaries were the property of the Mayor and Council. In that turbulent age with plenty of pickings floating around, the Mayoral chair became the seat of wisdom. The two sergeants of the Mace were constables of the Admiralty to enforce the orders of the Admiral. From this it can be seen why a succession of Mayors were so anxious to obtain charters and why a succession of Monarchs so readily granted charters.

The James 1 Charter must have been in part a recapitulation of an earlier charter. In 1576 Queen Elizabeth's favourite counsellor, the much travelled Sir Philip Sidney and his army "were received in Limerick with greater pomp than ever he had received elsewhere". This was a political move as Limerick was then begging for a charter, to rid them of the King's judges in their courts, the King's Admiral in their river and the King's taxgatherers in their franchise.

Following the death of the Protestant James 1, the city received a charter from his Catholic successor, Charles 1. The Protestant Ascendancy in England led by Oliver Cromwell were fearful that Charles had Papal plots in his head to restore the Roman Catholic religion as the State religion. They removed the King's head, using an axe, to protect the country from becoming once more an extern appendage of the Vatican.

Oliver by the grace of God, is the opening stanza of the Cromwellian charter which the Commonwealth parliament granted to the city in 1649. Vanity may have prompted Cromwell to jump on the Royal Bandwagon and perpetuate his name amongst the Roll of Kings who granted charters to Limerick. The Cromwell charter attracted penniless adventurers of all classes into Limerick such as "Gubbins, a wild Devonian tribe which followed Cromwell into Ireland and settled near Bruree, Co. Limerick". Most of those adventurers prospered and in time became Mayors, Sheriffs, wealthy Merchants and Landowners. "The stranger flourished while the natives perished". This was the curse of Cromwell, though the monks claim that St. Munchin put the jinks on the city because the citizens compelled him to work for his dinner. He had to carve in stone a cat with two tails before he put his legs under the table.

Cromwell believed in protective measures. He protected this country from the evils of a population explosion by reducing the population to an economic level. His savage attacks on monks and monasteries in Ireland and Britain protected both countries from becoming extern appendages of the Vatican ruled from Rome like the Papal states. Perhaps Cromwell was aware that in 1155 Pope Hadrian IV with gross impertinence had granted this country to Britain, and wished to prove that his claim to Ireland lay with the sword and not on a Papal Bull. In Drogheda he slaughtered the English garrison which was loyal to the Catholic Charles. As the monks who favoured



# THE CANONISATION OF OLIVER PLUNKETT

*"The canonisation of Blessed Oliver Plunkett is totally inopportune at the present moment. It would almost certainly increase the sectarian bitterness in the North, emphasising as it does that Oliver Plunkett died more for what divides Catholics and Protestants than for what they hold in common".*

— (Hibernia, 30 March, 1973).

IT IS difficult to understand the motivation behind the decision to canonise Blessed Oliver Plunkett. It is more difficult still to understand how Catholic leaders can be so insensitive to the political and ecumenical implications of the move at the present time.

Attention has to be drawn to a period of Oliver Plunkett's life which should certainly not provide marks for canonisation today. After ordination in 1654, Oliver Plunkett remained in Rome, where one of his appointments was that of "judex contra haeresim" — a judge of the notorious Inquisition, still at the height of its power and determined to stamp out heresy by the most sophisticated forms of torture and, where necessary, by burning at the stake. As Voltaire was to write later, in an imaginary but correct reconstruction of procedure,

*"It is for your good that the heads of the Inquisition direct that you shall be seized on the information of any one person, however infamous or criminal; that you shall have no advocate to defend you; that the name of your accuser shall not be made known to you; that the inquisitor shall promise you pardon and then condemn you; and that you shall then be subjected to five kinds of torture, and*

the king had urged the citizens to resistance, he slaughtered them. The citizens who should have taken a back seat and watched the English slaughtering each other were misled by the monks into the error of resistance. Cromwell protected them from further error by slaughtering them also; then, like a devout Christian he gave thanks to God for this great mercy. With such protective instincts and record he earned his title Lord Protector. This is the man who gave the city a charter in 1649. To-day the descendants of his brood of followers are more Irish than the descendants of the Norman settlers who in their day were more Irish than the Irish themselves. They are foremost in protecting the country from foreign influence. They endeavour to save the soul of Ireland. They are the new age resurrection men but the corpse eludes their revivalist fervour. "In 1796 an order was made by the court of King's Bench of Ireland that the books of the Corporation of Limerick should be deposited in the office of the Clerk of the Crown". "In 1799 the Court ordered that the books be given to J. Prendergast Smyth (afterwards Lord Gort) Chamberlain of the city. Gort signed a receipt for the books on the 25th July, 1797. When the production of the books was required, Gort denied under oath any knowledge of the books or what had become of them". The term Books would include all documents and charters. Because of the disappearance of those books and charters the authority of the Mayor and Council could be challenged in a court of law and could lead to confusion in the administration of the city. To regularise the position and to bring law and order into the city's affairs, the Limerick Regulation Act was passed in the British parliament in the 4th year of George IV in 1826. The preamble of that act states — "Many of the books and records of the Limerick Corporation were lost, withheld or suppressed". This Act of George IV is the last royal notice of Limerick city. It is an admission that all charters granted to Limerick City were rightly held and granted.

(To be continued).

*afterwards either flogged or sent to the galleys or ceremoniously burned" (Quoted by Margaret Knight, Honest to Man, p.87).*

Surely this is as reminiscent of sectarian murder as is the trial and execution of Oliver Plunkett himself? And if it is, his canonisation in the present circumstances is a vivid and tragic reminder to both Catholic and Protestant assassins that what they are doing to one another today is merely a continuation of what their forefathers did before them. It is coming very close to putting a stamp of official approval on the whole gruesome process.

Other negative factors that have been noted in regard to the canonisation decision:—

- 1) It is a red herring to distract attention from the leadership vacuum in the Irish Church so openly castigated in the report *Focus for Action* recently published by the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (Men).
- 2) It is an assertion of Roman centralism at a time when the concept of the local Church is being emphasised as a result of Vatican II.
- 3) It will be interpreted by many as an attempt to boost Italian tourism during the 1975 Holy Year (Cardinal Conway's stated canonisation target was 1981, the third centenary year).
- 4) The normal process of Canon Law, requiring two miracles for canonisation, has been dispensed with (Canon 2138).
- 5) The single miracle on which the canonisation is based is very questionable, especially as it comes from miracle-mongering Naples, home of St. Januarius and the "miracle" of the liquefying blood. (It began as a cure of a ruptured uterus; it now includes restitution of bladder functioning).
- 6) Mgr. John Hanly, Postulator of the canonisation cause, will be publishing an edition of the letters of Oliver Plunkett soon. The canonisation should certainly help the sales of the book. Has it to be admitted that Holy Ireland could not produce a single miracle to ensure its third canonisation in the fifteen hundred years of its Christian history?

Footnote: Someone should start a movement for the canonisation of St. Patrick. He has never, of course, been formally canonised, by the Church.

Reprinted from "Hibernia", 20/12/'74.

BY REV. JAMES GOOD

## THE RECOIL OF ROME

How small and insignificant seem  
 Things whence the greatest evils come,  
 As from a dull shout, the avalanche starts its run,  
 So do men their own destruction scheme  
 In hypocrisy clouded Sunday religion  
 While I, the fool, in singular fascination  
 See and wonder how deadly trivial it all seems.  
 For there are in every man two forces dominant  
 Of opposite charges equal planted in  
 Some dark corner of the inner brain. Rent  
 Thus, how can all but grievously sin.  
 In all our hearts the sins of the flesh do grind,  
 But minor indeed are they to the sins of the mind.



P.J. ("CUSHY") RYAN:

# A MAN AND HIS MANUSCRIPT

## THE MAN

WHEN P.J. Ryan died at the City Home Hospital, aged over 70 years, in June last year few people heard about the event or attended his funeral. His death was in keeping with his entry into the world and with the conditions of his life. He left no known relatives behind him.

Ryan never knew his parents and was reared at the old Christian Brothers Orphanage at Sexton Street. Little is known about his early years or about this period after he left the Orphanage. He joined the Free State Army during the Civil War and took part in some of the fighting. He was strongly anti-Republican at this time and regarded most of the people who opposed the Treaty of 1921 as misguided. He blamed much of the country's troubles on de Valera and regarded him as a cunning, Machiavellian politician.

Other republicans particularly disliked by Ryan included Patrick Pearse, the two Erskine Childers and Liam Mellows. His experiences during the Civil War form the basis of his unpublished manuscript, "The Fourth Siege of Limerick". After his stint in the army, Ryan worked as a handyman and spent most of his life working at that occupation.

Ryan continued his opposition to the de Valera's policies. When Fianna Fail had become the Government in 1932, Ryan joined the I.R.A. in the late thirties. He was apprehended by the police outside Annacotty in May 1940 and was found to be in possession of arms. He received a long prison sentence for the transfer of his allegiance from the official army of the State to the unofficial one. Ryan claimed to have had Brendan Behan as one of his fellow-prisoners.

After his release from prison following the end of the Second World War, Ryan went back to his work as a handyman and does not seem to have involved himself in any further I.R.A. activities. He became an expert in bee-keeping and gardening, gaining a vast knowledge of scrubs and flora. A local historian who remembers Ryan's activities in those days has recorded:

*My first recollections of "Cushy" Ryan go back to the early thirties, as he practised on his clarinet in the old band room of St. John's, at Barrack Lane, off Gerald Griffin Street. Even at that time he was regarded as a "character". Though I have forgotten most of his companions I distinctly remember his witty remarks, and his remarkable self confidence. He appeared to be well read and had a fine clear speaking voice, and was a most pleasing conversationalist.*

*After the war years he made new friends and found a host of admirers as he performed wonderful feats on the roller skates at the Ice Rink, in Henry St., where he excelled all others in the more graceful and dangerous exhibitions.*

*Always a lover of nature, his dearest wish was fulfilled when he was appointed as handyman at Mungret College, with his dream cottage thrown in.*

*During his years in this salubrious situation he became a skilled beekeeper and his services were in demand even in far away corners of the county.*

Ryan was also an enthusiastic cyclist and was a familiar sight in earlier days as he went about on a bicycle with high handle bars with members of the Clare Street and St. John's Square Clubs.

Apart from his stay at Mungret College, he lived in many other places around the city including Cussen's at the level crossing gates at Park, Hartnett's lodging-house at John's Street and at Clare Street. His last years were spent with his dog and books living in his specially rigged, burglar-proof rooms overhead Quin's Provision Stores at Parnell Street.

He was a regular letter-writer to the "Evening Herald" and

took part in some controversies in the correspondence columns of that paper. He refused to write articles or letters for the local Limerick press. "They are too mean; they wouldn't pay you a penny", he briskly replied to all questions on this count.

A final image of "Cushy" and his cap with the uptilted peak in the last days of his life is contained in the poem "The Final Siege", written after his death:

*He pushed back his old black cap  
Rubbed the bald, shiny head,  
"Another thing son ...  
Never speak ill of the dead".*

## THE MANUSCRIPT

"Cushy" Ryan tried as best he knew to get his manuscript published in the last three years of his life but without success. He never lost confidence that the book would be published some time and that it would be read and acknowledged in Limerick.

The story contained in the manuscript contains little sentimentality and gives an unheroic and unbuttoned account of the Civil War in Limerick. His historical notes are written in a spare, colloquial style, though he largely ignores the history of the nineteenth century.

In setting the scene for the Civil War he gives a hitherto unexplored view of Georgian Limerick from the depths of the city's sewers. His description of bewigged and buckled servants elegantly tipping brimming chamberpots into the mouths of sewers named Cornwallis, Victoria, and George every morning is vivid and colourful. (It is well known in Georgian circles that Lady Geraldine Dunravin is very keen on exploring Limerick's underground passages. Perhaps the publication of "Cushy's" manuscript might be the start of Georgian walking tours of Limerick's sewers, led by Lady Geraldine and Seamus O'Conneide).

Ryan's lively account of the harrowing social conditions prevailing at the turn of the century is a valuable contribution to local social history. He shows compassion for the poor while at the same time poking fun at the pomposity of the middle classes. The disgusting and obscene voyeurism at the City Home, which he depicts, exposes the hidden punishment suffered by unmarried mothers at this time.

Epigrams and ironic understatements abound and some of these, such as, "From this incident it is clear that patriots can create a lot of misfortune for themselves and others" are effective and original.

One of the best passages in the manuscript is the account of the stoning of Pearse and his followers on their visit to Limerick on Whit Sunday 1915. The formal and slightly pompous style used here is highly effective in showing up Pearse and the other leaders and their insensitive, arrogant caperings. His idiosyncratic description of the local Volunteers famous march to Killonan on Good Friday 1916 presents this bungled venture in its true light for the first time in Limerick's one-sided history, or "published verbosity", as Ryan called it.

Readers with a military turn of mind will find his account of the strategy of both sides in the Civil War interesting. Other people should find it hilarious, especially as there was so little intentional shedding of blood. The description of the firing of the cannon gun from Arthur Quay to the Strand Barracks is a skilled piece of comic writing. His accounts of robberies at banks and at the Railway Station is Irish republican history with a difference. In dealing with Northern Ireland Ryan shows an unusual insight into the question when he states that the Northern Protestants had "the will and the means" not to be forced into a "United" Ireland.

Some women readers will be disappointed that "Cushy" did not elaborate on "The Pals" brigade. This group had the reputation for being "ladies men" and were regarded as the "swingers" of their day. They later became involved with the Blueshirts.

As stated in our last edition "The Fourth Siege of Limerick" should serve as a useful and humorous antidote to the conventional and nationalistic histories dealing with the Civil War in the city. The first part of the manuscript appears on page four of this edition.



A  
PASTORAL  
LETTER

# HERE TO PREY

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

MY friends were so right to encourage my Christmas visit; I've been *in partibus* too long. If I had only seen at first hand the City of the Broken Promise when I was recommended as Coadjutor there'd be a different tale to tell, especially when there is so much good I can do for Limerick and, more to the point these hard times, so much good Limerick can do for us.

By the way, I'm not doing away with Dr. Newman: I am going to make him an offer he can't refuse: back to Maynooth on permanent holidays — with pay-and, if he wishes, he can draft my Pastorals on a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, jobs on merit, the crucifixion of Nixon, foreign dancing, evil literature, all the stuff that no one pays any attention to.

But I have no intention of going in for the wholesale sackings of clergy who really believe in honesty as not only the best policy, but the only policy. That's all right in West Limerick but for the city I shall demand a change of rhetoric. A week or two on Dan Ryan's forecourt and they'll be glad to hang on to my canonicals.

I think a bloomer was made in introducing me to that shopkeeper, the one with the 40p Cork rabbits in the window, whose hand went limp at my name. That fellow had the gall to collect wastepaper for Young Munsters rugby club. True he dropped his collection fast when Dr. Murphy's assistant-priests came round to remind him that this activity was harming the waste paper collection for the Church. Nice one, Dr. Murphy! Indeed, until it was mentioned that the rabbit man was a Fianna Fail Councillor I was going to invite him to kiss my amethyst for such swift surrender to the greater glory etcetera.

By the way, when they're collecting rabbits for me as Coadjutor I hope they demand the skins (I used to get a penny apiece — an old penny of course — for them in Ennis. Those were the days!) They must be worth quite a handy bit these days. I learned *in partibus* to go for the rabbit and leave the skin. Of course, if this shopkeeper demonstrates his usefulness to me as Coadjutor I might make him a Sub-deacon. I won't have him on the Council of course: he's had his share of the cream, though my new Local Income Tax will take care of some of that.

By the way, I liked the fairy lights, put up you tell me, in honour of Santa Claus and not, as I thought, to rope in the unwary shopper. Well, glory be, so they still believe in Santa Claus in Limerick! But why should I be surprised when they've been believing in Fianna Fail all these years. But those young men at the street corners? Idle, you say, or working only three days a week. Together we'll think of something useful for them to do so they'll feel they are earning all that good money dished out as dole. While I'm on the subject of work, you must not fail to give Mr. Dan Ryan my warmest congratulations and, vicariously, offer him my amethyst to kiss.

He comes specially to mind when I recall that man lying in bed smoking an expensive cigarette in the local hospital ward. Is that man typical of the Limerick worker? He's the one who lost that good job with Dan Ryan, £40 a week it was. What was wrong with the hours anyhow? Eight o'clock in the morning till eleven at night in a well-built garage forecourt putting petrol in those Mercedes-Benz. Why it's almost FULL EMPLOYMENT!

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And he had Dan Ryan himself going to the trouble of giving him regular warnings that there are plenty of people only too anxious to take the job if he wasn't satisfied. What more, I ask you, could you expect Mr. Ryan to do? Think of the fringe benefits: the man coming home at an hour when he would not have a nagging wife to face, or children to get under his feet, and the Late Late Show to watch in comfort. We want more

men like Dan who know the value of money and the virtue of work. There's a man who will appreciate me as Coadjutor. He won't jib at the £5,000 I'll want to have him made a Count (make sure you spell that right!) of the Holy Roman Empire. In a country with more than its share of Counts (spell that right too!) there can be few as worthy as Mister Dan.

I must confess I was disappointed at my first view of the Bishop O'Dwyer Bridge. But the magnificent statue to my illustrious predecessor at the rowing club alongside fair took my breath away. Edward T. in sporting garb and in colour. Joseph and His Technicolor Dreamcoat isn't in it with him! But the crozier has been put in the wrong hand, just the sort of stupid error that Andy McEvoy, my father (excommunicated by Bishop O'Dwyer for telling the truth in the *Limerick Leader*) would have pounced on.

My disappointment over the Bishop O'Dwyer Bridge stems from the other bridge you showed me, Baal's Bridge, put up in George the Fourth's time. It's in much better nick. Now that you are on the Monuments Committee you will of course, see that the care and attention lavished on the old Baal's is given to the-comparatively-new.

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Another thing, what's this nonsense about the man who said "Good night, brother" to me? Was it because I was wearing a beret that he mistook me for a Christian Brother. But there are no Christian Brothers in Limerick, are there? I thought that Bishop O'Dwyer had kicked them out lock, stock and leather from Bruff, in my father's time. Something about their attempt to take money from Munchin's with a crackpot scheme to give free education to the children of the poor. Free! Why we all know that anything you get free is never appreciated. Don't tell me those Brothers have filtered back! Wait till I take over and they'll get what's what, I'll larn'em and leather'em.

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I must go now; the collection is a bit slow in Foxrock and I've got to watch it. Too much lifting the elbow at the Leopardstown Inn has lumbered me with a debt of £98,000. I'd have soon cleared that and have a bit over, but Limerick calls and Limerick has first claim.

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I was impressed by your city, especially the care it gives to babies. Fancy a maternity home in jail with a round-the-clock military guard, sandbags and searchlights! But it's only right. Lots of patriots have died in jail but this is the only one I can recall who's been born in jail. Pensionable service from the word go and no fiddling of documents about ambushes just a simple certificate from Corish. I suppose it is indelicate to ask who's the lucky father. Someone told me "a screw", but that could be a joke — in bad taste too — because even I know — and Sean Bourke can confirm it — that they're all prison officers now.

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It only remains for me to offer the city my blessing. As for the Fianna Fail they can have the plenary bonus of kissing my amethyst, anytime and everytime and the Taca too. Up Garryowen!

Dermot McEvoy.



# 'The Parish Pump'

WHEN THE PIG-BUYER WAS KING

PART THREE

THE story of the rise and decline of "The Parish" pig-buyers has never been documented. Only residual memories of their halcyon days now linger on in Limerick. These memories mainly find expression in humorous tales about some of the more unusual and exotic exploits of the buyers.

The best known story describes how a batchelor pig-buyer on one of his trips away from Limerick became "great" with a country girl. The girl asked her new-found friend to send her a picture of himself. The intrepid pig-buyer duly had his photograph taken and sent it to his admirer. The picture showed "The Parish" man holding two unruly bonhams with an X marked over his head. Underneath the picture he earnestly wrote: "This is me, the pig-buyer, in the middle".

Another story relates how a pig-buyer was staggering home through "The Parish" one evening after a drinking spree. As he passed Creagh Lane, he was suddenly "short-taken". The burly, hard-pressed man backed himself hurriedly into a corner of the lane, dropped his trousers and clattered away. When he had relieved himself, he looked furtively around for some article with which to complete his ablutions. The situation looked bleak for the desperate pig-buyer until the plaintive cry of "me-ow" heralded the arrival of a stray kitten on the horizon. As the cat drew nearer, inspiration dawned on the troubled but ever resourceful pig-buyer. Grabbing the fluffy kitten, he brusquely wiped the hapless animal across his exposed and befringed nether orifice. After carelessly and heartlessly flinging the badly exploited and discoloured cat into the distance, the pig-buyer hoisted his trousers and continued on his unsteady but now more contented way.

But the life of the pig-buyers was many-sided. It is difficult today to re-construct that life, as changes in modern living and in the physical appearance of "The Parish" itself have brought about a total transformation resulting in the extinction of the pig-buyers as a separate species.

Social mobility has also changed the face of "The Parish". Over the last fifteen years there has been an exodus of "Parishioners" to Corbally. The natives left behind in Athlunkard Street, however, still occupy positions of power on the Credit Union Committee and the Parish Council.

Not many of the people of the Abbey area have yet made the move to Corbally; the natives here still live in a huddle of little one-storey houses behind Treacy's packet-and-tripe shop. The people who have gone from the Abbey have mostly been banished to Ballynanty and other distant Corporation estates.

There has always been a sharp social divide between the people of the Abbey and Athlunkard Street, despite the fact that both communities were engaged in the provision business. (Like the pig-buyers, the once closely-knit and well organised Abbey fishermen have, for different reasons, also become extinct).

Lace curtains and aspidistras in the windows of Athlunkard Street and caged birds and pigeons fluttering around the houses of the Abbey were further distinctions in the two neighbourhoods. These and other differences developed between the communities despite the fact that the Abbey folk were burying their dead in the precincts of St. Mary's Cathedral when Athlunkard Street was some Norman Knight's backyard.

All the pig-buying families — the Reids, Crowes, O'Connors, O'Donovans and Sheahans — originated from the terraces of one-storey houses below the present St. Mary's Catholic

Church. The suitability of the long, narrow yards of these houses for pig rearing was probably a factor in this phenomenon.

Up to the end of the Second World War many people in the working class areas of Limerick kept pigs in their back yards. A bucket of potato skins and other slops delivered to the pig owners would invariably yield ½d or 1d and often earned the price of the "pictures" for enterprising children. The urban-bred pigs were sold to the pig-buyers, who in turn sold them to the bacon factories at a handy profit.

The prosperity of the pig-buyers is now only a legend, but their social pretensions, in relation to the merchants and professional people in the city, always remained suitably modest. They preferred to be big fish in a small pond, or (to change to a more appropriate metaphor) big pigs at a small trough. The buyers sent their daughters to St. Mary's Convent and their sons to Creagh Lane School. The only intellectual of note produced by "The Parish" was the artist Sean Keating, R.H.A., who left Limerick at the earliest possible opportunity and has seldom re-visited his native city in the last half-century.

The people of "The Parish" have always been notoriously conservative in their political and religious convictions. After the split in the Irish Party, they supported the Healyites. The Abbey people, perhaps less influenced by the clergy, remained Parnellites. Frequent clashes between the two factions took place in the days of parliamentary nationalism. This hereditary political conservatism later led to the pig-buyers supporting Fine Gael and the Abbey fishermen supporting Fianna Fail. A parallel development took place in Waterford where the pig-buyers held similar political attitudes). During the Civil War, however, the Gilligan brothers, Christy and Willie, took the Republican side while other members of that long-tailed family and some other pig-buyers were in the opposite camp:

If the Limerick pig-buyers were not distinguished for their brain power they compensated for this shortcoming by their body and leg power. They greatly contributed to the fame achieved by the Garryowen Rugby Football Club. Many of the names of the pig-buying families are scattered closely through the club's Munster Cup-winning teams and a number of these well-known players went on to gain international honours. Later in the early fifties, in the twilight of the pig-buyers, when Garryowen had become diluted with bank clerks and "countrymen", the tradesmen of "The Parish" reneged Garryowen in favour of the newly formed Shannon Senior team.

As an escape perhaps from their mundane business lives the pig-buyers appear to have been a pleasure-loving lot during their recreational hours and days. Their musical tradition of Grand Opera, musical comedy and Victorian parlour songs shows that they frequented the old Theatre Royal. They also helped to make Kilkee the popular seaside resort that it is today among the lower-middle and working classes. West Clare was one big pig market for the buyers so they knew and liked the district well enough to spend the whole summer (the off-season in the pig-buying business) there. They lodged mostly on Albert Road (now O'Curry Street) and in the houses around the Market Square. The elegant Regency terraces on the West End were the preserve of the Limerick merchant princes, the social seaweed curtain being the Royal Marine Hotel.

In the fishing off-season, while the pig-buyers were sunning themselves at Kilkee and enjoying the bracing Atlantic air, the Abbey fishermen were trying to eke out a living as labourers ("Yanks") in the bacon factories and on building sites.

But with the elimination of the pigbuyers — mainly brought about through the agency of the Pigs and Bacon Commission — and the general decline in the pig trade, the affluence of the buyers dwindled quickly away. Many took up other occupations and some died in relatively poor circumstances. A notable exception to this decline was that modest "Parish" man, Thomas Sheahan, who was widely renowned for his swimming ability and for his charity-giving. When he died, less than a decade ago he left nearly one thousand pounds after a lifetime of buying and selling the lucrative animal.

We regret that owing to pressure of space the second part of "Education": A reply to Dr. Newman" has been held over to our February edition.